

# Tobacco-Free Living

## Background Information/Rationale for Focus

According to the Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (CTUMS, 2008), slightly less than five million people, representing nearly 17.9 per cent of the population aged 15 years and older, are current smokers. Nearly 13.5 per cent of current smokers report smoking daily and smoke an average of 14.9 cigarettes per day.<sup>1</sup>

In Waterloo Region just under twenty-four per cent (23.8%) of adults were current smokers and 19.1 per cent were daily smokers (had at least one cigarette per day) (CCHS, Cycle 4.1 2007-2008). Among adults 18 years or older, 71.7 percent intended to quit smoking at some point in the future; 16 per cent intended to quit within six months; 12 per cent intended to quit but had not decided when to do so; and nearly a third of all adult smokers had no intention of quitting smoking.<sup>3</sup>



The *Smoke-Free Ontario Act*, which came into effect May 31, 2006, prohibits smoking in all enclosed public places and enclosed workplaces, including work vehicles, in Ontario. The legislation is intended to protect workers and the public from the hazards of second-hand smoke (SHS).<sup>3</sup> Second-hand smoke causes heart disease, lung cancer, induction and exacerbation of asthma; preterm delivery (low birth weight babies), sudden infant death syndrome, bronchitis, pneumonia, and other lower respiratory tract infections; chronic cough, phlegm, wheezing, breathlessness and middle ear infections. Second-hand smoke has been linked to respiratory problems, stroke, breast, cervical, nasal and sinus cancers; learning and behavioural development problems in children, exacerbation of cystic fibrosis and brain cancer lymphomas. People with diabetes, high blood pressure, vascular diseases, asthma, bronchitis and emphysema are particularly vulnerable when exposed to SHS. Exposure can also lead to headaches and eye, nose and throat irritation. More than 1,000 non-smokers die in Canada each year due to heart disease and cancers caused by second-hand smoke.<sup>4</sup>

### Workplace Example:

#### *Added Benefits for Non-Smokers*

Knowing that an employee who smokes can cost businesses an extra \$3,396/year on average<sup>5</sup> – why not use this money as an incentive to help smokers quit? Offer to pay for employee smoking cessation programs and provide fitness centre membership subsidies for non-smokers or those actively involved in a smoking cessation program.

A smoke-free workplace helps to significantly reduce smoking and motivate employees to quit smoking by removing triggers for employees who may be tempted to smoke. Smoke-free workplace policies create safer workplaces by eliminating exposure to the harmful effects of second-hand smoke and by providing assistance for employees who smoke to cut down or quit.<sup>4</sup>

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Studies also show that smoke-free policies reduce the costs for cleaning, replacing damaged equipment and furniture and fire insurance. Employees are an organization's most important asset.<sup>6</sup> A comprehensive workplace tobacco control policy is an effective tool for promoting, protecting and improving employee health.

## Goals For The Workplace To Strive For

1. To provide a safe work environment by eliminating exposure to second-hand smoke through compliance with the *Smoke-Free Ontario Act*, the *Region of Waterloo Smoking By-Law* and the federal *Non-smokers' Health Act*.
2. To provide a supportive environment that encourages employees to quit smoking.

## Getting Started – Utilizing a Variety of Health Promotion Strategies

### Awareness Raising

- Utilize bulletin boards and displays featuring tips and resources on quitting smoking
- Dedicate an accessible area to display pamphlets and resources regarding quitting smoking, second-hand smoke, and the benefits of quitting smoking
- Promote National Non-Smoking Week (3rd week in January) and World No Tobacco Day (May 31st) as an opportunity to encourage employees to quit
- If your benefit plan covers medications which can help with quitting smoking, promote this information to employees; if it doesn't consider possibilities for coverage or subsidies
- Raise awareness and comply with current legislation (i.e., *Smoke-Free Ontario Act* and, for federally regulated workplaces, the *Non-smokers' Health Act*)

### Skill Building

- Offer presentations/ workshops based on employee interest through lunch-and-learn sessions discussing smoking cessation
- Encourage employees to participate in the provincial Quit Smoking Contest or organize your own internal quit smoking contest
- Support relevant staff to attend training to provide cessation counseling and support

### Creating Supportive Environments

- Provide incentives, support and/ or resources to employees who want to quit smoking
- Offer a workplace quit smoking program and/ or support group

## Create Healthy Workplace Policy

- Determine where smoking will be allowed on the outdoor property surrounding your workplace
- Set-up outdoor supports to encourage employee compliance (e.g. ashtrays, painted lines, seating)
- Offer full or partial reimbursement for nicotine replacement therapy (e.g., nicotine patch, gum, lozenge and inhaler) and/ or pharmacotherapy (i.e., prescription medications to help employees quit)
- Provide a comprehensive mix of tobacco cessation programming and activities throughout the year (e.g. counselling, contests, health fairs, theme weeks, self-help materials)



Telephone consultation is available through **Project Health: 519-883-2287**

## Region of Waterloo Public Health Resources

Project Health has a number of resources available for planning, implementing and evaluating your workplace wellness activities. As well, we have a number of links to external resources that you may find helpful. Please see [www.projecthealth.ca](http://www.projecthealth.ca) for further resources on this topics area.

Also, the Public Health Resource Centre has a number of displays, educational kits, DVDs, posters, books, and pamphlets relevant to workplace health. Search for resources using the online catalogue. Or simply contact Resource Centre staff with your topic and they will suggest resources for you. Note that resources may be booked in advance.

For more information, click [here](#) (link to:

<http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/health.nsf/DocID/1FB38293EBA4935785256B120060265E?OpenDocument>)

Phone: 519-883-2256

Email: [phrc@regionofwaterloo.ca](mailto:phrc@regionofwaterloo.ca)

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Health Canada. (2008). *Canadian tobacco use monitoring survey (CTUMS). Supplementary tables, annual 2008*. Retrieved from [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/tobac-tabac/research-recherche/stat/ctums-esutc\\_2008/ann-table1-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/tobac-tabac/research-recherche/stat/ctums-esutc_2008/ann-table1-eng.php)
- <sup>2</sup> Canadian Community Health Survey, Cycle 4.1. (2007-2008). Extracted March 5, 2010. [Data file].
- <sup>3</sup> Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (RRFSS), Sept to December 2003 (n=191), January to December 2004 (n=576), January/ February & May to December 2005 (n=489) and January to June 2006 (n=308).
- <sup>3</sup> Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion. (2008). *Smoke-free Ontario: Legislation*. Retrieved from <http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/en/smoke-free/legislation/default.asp>
- <sup>4</sup> Health Canada (2003). *Towards a healthier workplace: A guidebook on tobacco control policies*. Retrieved from <http://hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/pubs/tobac-tabac/work-trav/index-eng.php>
- <sup>5</sup> Conference Board of Canada (2006). *Smoking and the bottom line: Updating the costs of smoking in the workplace*. Retrieved from [http://www.conferenceboard.ca/documents\\_EA.asp?rnext=1754](http://www.conferenceboard.ca/documents_EA.asp?rnext=1754)



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Supporting Healthy Workplaces